

Life Pregnancy Care

ANNUAL REPORT

2010

Life Pregnancy Care

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CHY: 9172

Introduction

LIFE Pregnancy Care Service is a voluntary organisation registered for charitable purposes (9172) established in 1981 to provide a positive alternative to abortion. It is also non-denominational and non-party political.

The aims of LIFE are:

- 1) To help women avoid abortion by providing a free, confidential, pregnancy care service to all women regardless of race, colour, creed, marital status, age. Aspects of the service may be extended to other persons concerned with pregnancy.
- 2) To educate people about the true nature of abortion, that is, the deliberate destruction of human life at any time between fertilisation and birth and about the consequences of abortion.
- 3) To support women and men who are grieving following abortion.

In furtherance of its aim of helping women avoid abortion LIFE offers a range of services to women and men with crisis pregnancies both in its Care Centres and on the National 1850 Helpline. Services are offered by volunteers and in some Centres also by paid staff.

LIFE believes that when a woman presents with a crisis pregnancy there are two clients and consequently counsellors have a duty of care to both mother and baby. The LIFE Mission Statement supports this ethos.

LIFE MISSION STATEMENT

LIFE cares for you both

As a community organisation:

We believe in the uniqueness and value of human life from conception

We understand the distress and lack of support a woman may experience due to an unplanned pregnancy

We exist to provide a positive alternative for women considering abortion and to give support for anyone, including fathers, experiencing problems during and after pregnancy

We hope that by providing ongoing support to clients in a compassionate and non-judgemental relationship, each will find strength to cope with the difficulties they face

We recognise that people are responsible for their own decisions

We commit ourselves to providing a confidential and professional service of counselling, education and practical help for those who come to LIFE Pregnancy Care

Counselling Services to Clients

LIFE Care Centres are located in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Thurles. The counselling service is offered by volunteers and paid professional staff.

The following chart shows the number of clients availing of counselling during 2010

	Clients	Hours	Type	Counsellors
Jan – March	129	146	One to One	42 Volunteers
	111	27	Telephone	3 staff
	110	24	Internet	
April – June	99	157	One to One	48 volunteers
	104	29	Telephone	3 staff
	152	21	Internet	
July – September	110	161	One to one	45 volunteers
	115	28	Telephone	3 staff
	69	4	Internet	
October – December	93	121	One to one	45 volunteers
	81	17	Telephone	3 staff
	38	15	Internet	

A total number of 1,211 clients received counselling over 750 hours. A total of 431 clients of whom 396 were women attended Life Care centres for one to one counselling. The remainder received counselling through the Internet or telephone.

Client Age Profile 2010 (one to one counselling)

Under 17	17 - 24	25- 34	35-44	44+	Not Known
41	142	150	55	35	8

Client Region of Origin (one to one counselling)

Ireland	Europe	Africa	Asia	Australia	N. America	S. America
359	25	31	2		3	7

Client Source of Referral (one to one counselling)

Positive Options	Life Ads	Internet	GP	Previous Contact	Word of Mouth	Other
2	59	26	43	120	129	25

Centre Requests/Client Contacts (Visits, Telephone and Internet)

Centre Requests	2007	2008	2009	2010
Abortion Request	140	167	167	97
Accommodation	91	115	110	50
Adoption	15	7	12	9
Appointment	73	60	99	106
Benefits Information	41	67	46	27
Contraception	39	14	25	21
DNA Testing	18	8	6	4
Family Issues	21	33	25	51
Fertility/Infertility	69	14	51	27
Legal Query	9	18	14	11
Medical Query	111	34	102	74
Miscarriage		5	39	78
Morning After Pill	108	22	57	60
Pregnancy Counselling	891	888	592	582
Pregnancy Testing	258	280	260	225
Post Abortion Counselling	207	351	297	242
Post Pregnancy Support		44	40	366
Silent Calls	98	3	104	67
Other	50	71	168	164
Totals	2,239	2,201	2,214	2,261

These statistics give some notion of the variety of client requests, the age range and diversity of client region of origins but no statistics can begin to capture the very real human emotions generated by a crisis pregnancy. In the years since the establishment of the service the nature of issues presented by women in crisis has become significantly more complex. In many instances the pregnancy alone is not the issue, rather the woman may have many more issues *i.e.* relationship, financial, accommodation concerns which will have a significant impact on her ability to parent alone.

The largest number of contacts was for pregnancy counselling and represents 26% of the total contacts. There were 97 requests for abortion which is a 58% decrease on the figure for the previous year.

Post Abortion Counselling

Two hundred and nineteen (219) hours of counselling representing 242 post abortion counselling sessions were offered to clients grieving the loss of their babies. Post abortion counselling differs from crisis pregnancy counselling in that the client contracts for a minimum number of sessions each of which last approximately one hour.

Life offers post abortion counselling based on client need.

Quarter	Clients	Hours
Jan – March	13	61
April – June	11	69
July – Sept	11	48
Oct – Dec	9	41

National Helpline 1850 281 281

The Helpline service available since 1995 operates from 9am – 9pm Mon to Sat and from 3pm to 9pm on Sun and continues to offer an out of hours telephone counselling and support to clients. The generosity of volunteers enables a listening ear and a human voice to be available at times like St. Patrick's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Christmas Day and New Years' Day.

The number of contacts to the National Helpline during 2010 outside of Centre opening times i.e. evenings, weekends and bank holidays was 72, a decrease of 59% on the figure for 2009. The numbers are made up as follows:

17 requests for abortion (as compared to 22 in 2009)

9 medical queries (of which 6 were for contraception including the morning after pill)

25 for pregnancy counselling

3 post abortion counselling.

Telephone counselling can lead to a deep level of engagement with a client and what may commence as a query on a specific practical need such as accommodation or benefits information can lead to counselling at the heart of the query. A total of 379 telephone calls led to a counselling engagement and 95 hours of counselling were delivered via the telephone both by staff and volunteers in Centres and by volunteers outside of Centre opening times.

Internet Counselling

The Internet continues to be an effective tool through which clients may avail of Life's counselling and support services. There had been a steady increase in contacts via the Internet and the highest figure (473) was recorded for 2009. During 2010 the figure decreased by 34% to 312. Some Life staff availed of additional training to meet the needs of clients who contact Life through this medium.

Post Pregnancy Supports

LIFE continues to provide post pregnancy supports both to mothers with babies and after pregnancy loss.

Many first time mothers feel isolated in their new role as parents and need support. This is provided both through the accommodation services, Help-line support, information and onward referral as well as Parenting Courses offered in Cork and Thurles. The development of the crèche in Cork enables parents to access the help they need with parenting issues while young children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. There were 366 contacts for post pregnancy supports during 2010.

Accommodation Service

The accommodation service offered by LIFE, while it may not meet the needs of every applicant continues to provide a safe haven for many mothers and their babies. In some cases what may begin as a request for accommodation may lead to a deep level of engagement around many other client issues *e.g.* relationship, lack of partner and familial supports, separation from family of origin and own country, legal status in Ireland.

The plight of migrant women who become pregnant in Ireland is often particularly stressful. Some may be concealing the pregnancy from their families of origin and many do not have entitlement to welfare or maternity benefits and may have little or no support. LIFE continues to assist some migrant women from its own resources and support them through pregnancy, birth, with parenting and moving on.

LIFE provides accommodation for pregnant women and mothers with babies in Dublin. Clients may first come to the service at the beginning of pregnancy and remain for up to a year after the birth of the baby.

The Dublin LIFE Committee has been offering an accommodation service in a four bedroom city centre house since 1983 which can accommodate one expectant mother and three mothers with babies. The centrally heated house is maintained to a high standard.

In 2010 six mothers and six babies were accommodated for periods ranging from 6 weeks to twelve months.

Life House residents are supported through the counselling service and by the support worker who provides information benefits, access to legal information liaising with the Community Welfare Officer, providing support during court hearings and paternity testing, help with finding new accommodation and moving on. Some clients who have moved on to private accommodation continue to maintain contact re parenting alone and relationship

issues. Some mothers with no entitlement to benefit have been supported from house funds. Counselling support during pregnancy and after the birth of the baby is provided by counsellors in the Dublin Centre.

The accommodation service located in Galway separated from Life in June 2010 through a mediated agreement to be managed by a new local organisation.

Education/Outreach Service

Life has developed its own resource material and including a DVD *Life is Worth It*. The aim of each session is to inform participants of Life services and to facilitate discussion discussions on the topic of crisis pregnancy, parenting alone, adoption abortion, decision making and life style choices. Students are afforded an opportunity to reflect on issues in a calm and considered manner so that their opinions are based on consideration of the facts rather than an emotional response.

During 2010 there were 45 presentations to 1,400 students in nineteen (19) second level school

Life also participated in open day events at third level colleges and institutions

There have been numerous requests for Life literature from students engaged in school project work especially students studying Leaving Cert Applied. Life is always happy to respond to student requests.

Media Issues

The topic of abortion will not go away but no longer commands the level of interest that it did in the 1980s and 1990s. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling that the rights of one of three women known as "C" who took a case challenging Irish abortion laws were breached because she had no "effective or accessible procedure" to establish her right to a lawful abortion received considerable media coverage.

Life responded to some queries from the media during the year in particular on the decision by Boots Chemists to make morning after contraception available over the counter without a prescription, on statistics for Irish women having abortions in the UK and on the ECHR ruling in December 2010.

Counsellor Training and Supervision

Volunteering has always played a major part in the provision of Life service.

During 2010 the Cork and Dublin Life Centres recruited and trained new volunteers.

Three volunteers continued professional studies aided by funding from the CPA. One staff member graduated in the NUI Maynooth Certificate in Crisis Pregnancy Training Course in November 2010 while five volunteers commenced study on this course in October.

A successful conference on pregnancy loss was organised by Life Dublin in April 2010 and participants included Life staff and volunteers, members of the medical profession and staff from other agencies.

From the beginning Life offered peer mentoring and support to volunteer counsellors. Since 2003 the Crisis Pregnancy Agency provides funding to enable Life to engage the services of external supervisors in all Centres. Regular 1:1 and Group supervision is available to all Life counsellors.

Volunteers

The role of volunteers has always been of pivotal importance in the delivery of client service and one of the benefits to Life of the current economic downturn has been an increase in volunteers. During 2010 there were forty five volunteers involved in offering the counselling and support services. Their dedicated service and that of volunteers on local Life Group Committees is acknowledged with gratitude.

LIFE Staff

Life Ireland Ltd is responsible for all staff employed to offer Life services. Six staff members are deployed in Cork and Dublin, five of whom are funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Agency. In addition Community Employment (CE) staff provided administrative support in Cork, Dublin. LIFE staff received appropriate training throughout the year to enable them to fulfil their roles in accordance with best practice.

Funding

LIFE receives public funding from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme and during 2010 received a total of €437,626. This funding is used to support the counselling service in all LIFE Centres, provide counselling supervision for current volunteers, accredited professional training, the certificate in crisis pregnancy counselling at NUI Maynooth and staff salaries. LIFE acknowledges the contribution public funding has made to the development of services and all accounts are fully audited each year.

Despite the current economic climate there has not been any significant reduction in public funding to date.

Church gate collections continue to be a good source of income for some Centres. The amount of €30,758 was raised through fundraising, donations and membership subscriptions during 2010.

The Dublin Life Accommodation Service received €42,665 from the Homeless Agency and Cork Life received €11,500 from the HSE South.

Challenges for the Future

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling in late December 2010 that there was no accessible and effective procedure to enable C to establish whether she qualified for a lawful termination of pregnancy in accordance with Irish law creates uncertainty about the future of Ireland's laws on abortion. Any law in favour of abortion in Ireland would present even greater challenges to the provision of a positive alternative.

The economic uncertainties re public finances may create uncertainties around public funding into the future and reductions in income may impact on fundraising.

Coping with a crisis pregnancy always presents many challenges not least financial. Migrant women who enter Ireland on work permits or student visas face financial barriers to continuing with pregnancy and parenting.

Maintaining service at current levels especially during out of hours demands generosity from staff and volunteers alike.

The increase in demand for post pregnancy supports will provide challenges to each Life Care Centre to meet the needs of mothers and fathers parenting alone.

Raising awareness of Life services will continue to demand imaginative approaches and creative thinking.

Directors of Life Ireland Ltd 2010

Chairwoman Gillian McGill

Secretary Mary Shiel

Treasurer Anne Fitzgibbon

Moira Morrissey

Fr. Kevin Doran (resigned in October 2010)

CEO Anne Kennedy